

The proposed charter for the city of Northampton would replace the existing charter, which was enacted in 1883 and amended numerous times since. The charter is the city's constitution, which defines the structure of city government. If ratified by the voters, the first election under the new charter would be the November 5, 2013 city election. The proposed charter would include the following provisions:

- The voters would continue to elect a 9-member city council, with 7 ward members and 2 members elected at large for 2-year terms. The city council would elect both a president and vice president.
- Voters would continue to elect a mayor as the city's executive officer. The term of the mayor would increase from 2 years to 4 years. The mayor would no longer preside over the meetings of the city council. That function would be exercised by the city council president.
- The school committee would continue as a 10-member body, with 7 elected ward members, 2 members elected at large and the mayor serving as the chair. The elected terms of school committee members would change from 4-year terms for ward members and 2-year terms for members elected at large to 2-year terms for both ward and at-large members.
- The charter contains procedures for the mayor to submit a proposed annual budget and a capital improvement plan to the city council, and for public hearings to be held by the city council on the proposed budget and capital improvement plan.
- The process for nominations and elections, including preliminary elections, are detailed in the proposed charter. The minimum number of required voter signatures for candidate nominations would be increased from 50 for all candidates to 150 for Mayor, 100 for at-large city council, at-large school committee, and the city clerk, and 50 for all other candidates.
- The proposed charter provides procedures for direct citizen participation through referendum and initiative processes.
- The charter would continue to be reviewed every 10 years, and the city's ordinances would be reviewed every 5 years.